

religious convictions without government interference or persecution.

We may take this idea for granted today, with 250 years of history at our backs, but at the time of our Nation's founding, the idea of religious freedom was radical. The world was a different place then. God-fearing, peaceful citizens around the world were commonly persecuted for their beliefs. They were tortured and thrown in prison without a fair hearing. In short, they did not have freedom. These are rights and freedoms that many in our country take for granted. They were denied what our Founders held to be basic human rights.

So at a great risk to themselves and their families, but with deeply held optimism for a new and better future, they sailed the Atlantic Ocean for the shores of the New World, for America.

Here they planted a new society based on freedom. Centuries later, we in this legislative body, are the guardians of this legacy. We are here to advance freedom and protect liberty. But we must be vigilant in this task.

President Ronald Reagan once said:

Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.

I agree with President Reagan, and that is why I rise today. Our basic freedoms are under attack. We must stand up and fight. We don't need to search long to find the wreckage of a society that does not value freedom.

I recently met with a group of constituents, Syrian Americans who live in Charleston, West Virginia. Many of them have family members and loved ones in Syria. Their stories provide a strong warning to us. In Syria, a cruel and brutal dictator, al-Assad, is attempting to silence opposing views. He has resorted to chemical weapon attacks on his own people. He has gunned down his own citizens. He has bombed hospitals and apartment complexes full of women and children. We can learn an important lesson from Syria: once tyranny grabs hold, it will grow and expand its reach. And the consequences can be drastic. In Syria, 4 out of 5 people live in poverty, more than 200,000 have been killed, a million wounded, and more than 3 million have fled the country.

But we should not be so arrogant as to think that our liberties here at home in the United States are safe. The evidence that our basic freedoms are under siege is growing, and I would like to share just a few stories that have recently come to my attention. For example, an 8-year-old second grade student in a New Jersey public school wanted to sing "Awesome God" at her after-school talent show, but she was told she couldn't because of the song's religious lyrics.

The Arizona Republic reported in July of 2012 that the pastor of a church

in Phoenix, Arizona, was jailed and fined \$12,000 for hosting a Bible study meeting in his private home. They outrageously claimed it violated zoning and fire code ordinances.

Five men in Richmond, Virginia, were threatened with arrest by local police officers for sharing their faith on a public sidewalk.

The University of Missouri threatened to withhold a student's diploma because she refused to participate in a class assignment that required her to write a letter to the Missouri legislator in support of homosexual adoption.

In a New York hospital, a pro-life nurse was coerced into providing a late-term abortion, even though her workplace had agreed in writing to honor her religious beliefs.

And in the beautiful Second Congressional District of West Virginia, which I have the honor of representing, Joe Holland, a businessowner, is currently being pushed to violate his religious views and values by an ObamaCare regulation that requires him to provide abortifacient drugs to his employees as a part of so-called health care. A regulation commonly known as the HHS mandate requires him to provide the drugs or face a penalty of \$100 per day per employee. For a company of 150 employees, that is about \$5.5 million a year, or about \$36,000 per employee.

These are just a few of the alarming stories about the religious freedoms of peaceful, God-fearing Americans being snatched away by a government that has lost its way. It is no coincidence that the very First Amendment to the United States Constitution says: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

Religious freedom was protected in the First Amendment to the Constitution. Our Forefathers valued that. They knew what could happen if we didn't protect our religious freedom.

We must take action and recommit ourselves to this basic right. Congress actually has taken action in the past on a bipartisan basis. In 1993, Congress passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, signed by President Clinton. The law says the government should not force anyone to violate their sincere religious beliefs, whether those beliefs are considered widely shared or not. This legislation unanimously passed this Chamber, United States House of Representatives, and it passed the Senate by a vote of 97-3 on October 27, 1993.

The broad support is because the legislation simply affirms our constitutionally endowed rights. But now support for this formerly bipartisan, widely supported law is eroding to the point that it has come under attack around the country, the recent events in Indiana being the recent highest profile example.

I believe that this Congress must be a Congress of action in defending religious freedoms. I understand that my good friend and colleague from Idaho, Mr. LABRADOR, is working on a bill to protect institutions and individuals who believe that marriage is between one man and one woman. I support this effort, and I look forward to being an original cosponsor when he introduces the bill.

I am also a proud cosponsor of the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act, which will ensure that adoption and foster care providers are not excluded by States for offering their services based on their religious beliefs. Unfortunately, some States have already begun punishing faith-based organizations that provide these services because of their religious beliefs. These religious freedom protections are needed now, and I hope they will be allowed a vote in this Chamber.

We can't do this alone. We do need the President, President Obama, to join with us to protect religious freedom. The President said on June 26, 2013, regarding the U.S. Supreme Court decision to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act the following about religious freedom: "On an issue as sensitive as this, knowing that Americans hold a wide range of views based on deeply held beliefs, maintaining our Nation's commitment to religious freedom is also vital."

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If the President really believes that religious freedom is "vital," he must back his words up with action. That hasn't happened. In fact, just the opposite has occurred, with the administration's attack on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which attacks those who believe in religious freedom, through its HHS mandate and its attack on the Defense of Marriage Act. He is not protecting religious freedom. We have to do that here.

We have a sacred obligation to pass on to our children and grandchildren a country that has the same love for liberty and religious freedom as the one we inherited, but this won't happen on its own. We need to stand up and fight with courage and conviction, fight right here and right now.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### --- **HOURLY OF MEETING ON TOMORROW**

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 2:30 p.m. tomorrow.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from West Virginia?

There was no objection.

#### --- **PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF ALBERT MELVIN MILLER**

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the